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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Federation of African Chambers of Commerce
Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Council
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
10-11 July 1987

REPORT OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION OF AFRICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

A. OPENING CEREMONY, ATTENDANCE AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Opening of the meeting (agenda item 1)

1. The first Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Council of the Federation of African Chambers of Commerce was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 10 to 11 July 1987. It was opened by Chief Adewemi O. LAWSON, Chairman of the Federation of African Chambers of Commerce. In his opening statement, Chief Lawson welcomed the delegates and stated that the regular meeting of the Governing Council could not be held in October 1986 due to financial constraints.

2. He informed the meeting that Professor Adebayo Adedeji, ECA Executive Secretary, acting as Interim Secretary General of the Federation, had communicated to him about the critical financial situation of the Federation of African Chambers of Commerce and its negative impact on the very existence of the organization and its future. In view of the meagre resources of national chambers of commerce which is further aggravated by their participation in various international bodies such as the International Chambers of Commerce (ICC), subregional federations of chambers of commerce and trade fairs, African governments under whose auspices the Federation was established, should assist in providing the necessary resources for its functioning. Unlike the French-speaking countries, the chambers of commerce of the English-speaking countries were established on a voluntary basis and as such were not receiving any statutory contributions or subsidies from governments. He further underlined the efforts made by ECA to collect financial contributions from member chambers. He also apologized on behalf of Professor Adebayo Adedeji who could not attend the meeting due to an ICC/AF meeting he was attending in Abuja, Nigeria.

Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by delegates from Chad, Comoros, Ethiopia and Algeria. The Embassy of Algeria represented the Algerian Chamber of Commerce. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa served as the secretariat of the meeting.

Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 2)

4. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening ceremony

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. Progress report on the implementation of decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its first ordinary meeting (Cairo, 19 to 20 March 1986)

   (a) Collection of contributions to the budget

   (b) Appointment of the Secretary General

   (c) Headquarters Agreement

(c) Practical modalities for the establishment of the secretariat and launching of operational activities;

(d) Date and venue of the next meeting of the Federation;

4. Any other business;

5. Adoption of the report and closure of the meeting.

II. PROCEEDINGS

Collection of contribution to the budget /Agenda item 3(a)/

6. A representative of the Trade Secretariat (ECA) presented document E/ECA/TRADE/83 - Progress Report on the Federation of African Chambers of Commerce. He informed the meeting that in spite of several cables and reminders requesting members of the Federation to pay their assessed contributions, only Algeria, Chad, Ethiopia, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia had paid their dues to date. The total amount received from these countries was only 37,920.35 US dollars or about 25 per cent of the assessed budget of 150,000 US dollars for the first year of functioning of the Federation (i.e. nine months in 1986). In view of this low level of available resources, it had not been possible to start operations of the Federation in July 1986 as decided by the General Assembly at its meeting in Cairo, Egypt in March 1986. For the same reason, the Secretary General of the Federation had not yet been appointed.

6. He further informed the meeting that Cameroon, Egypt and Algeria had expressed their intentions to pay their contributions. The meeting was further informed that the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Trade has instructed the Central Bank of Egypt to transfer to the Federation 7,500 US dollars representing the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce's contribution.

7. The meeting decided that,

(a) A strong appeal should be made to member chambers who have not yet done so to pay their assessed contributions immediately.

(b) ECA should assist in identifying and approaching national, regional and international organizations willing to support the Federation with a view to requesting them to contribute to the Federation through donations and grants;

(c) The Secretary General of the Federation and the Executive Secretary of ECA should, through the Secretary General of the OAU, make an appeal to all OAU member governments for financial assistance to the Federation.

(d) The first budget year of the Federation should start from 1 July 1987. Payments already received could be counted as subscriptions for the period 1 July 1987 through 30 June 1988.

(e) The Secretary General of the Federation and the ECA Executive Secretary, should seek observer status of the Federation in OAU meetings.

12. The Director of the International Trade and Finance Division of ECA (Dr. B.N. Nutharika) visited Cairo in June 1987 and discussed with representatives of the Egyptian Federation of Chambers of Commerce. His report entitled "Report on a mission to the Federation of African Chambers of Commerce" (Document No. E/ECA/TRADE/77) tabled at the meeting indicated no progress in solving the issue of the Headquarters of the Federation. Proposals are now submitted to the Governing Council for consideration to locate the Secretariat at ECA Headquarters until the issue is resolved.

13. During the discussions that followed, the meeting was informed by the Egyptian delegate that efforts were being deployed to secure adequate office facilities and equipment for the Secretariat of the Federation in Cairo. He pointed out that the responsibility rested with the Federation of African Chambers of Commerce to hold discussions with the relevant Egyptian authorities (the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) with a view to finalizing and signing the Headquarters Agreement as it had always been the task of the Federation to negotiate the relevant agreement.

14. The Meeting decided that discussions for the signing of the Agreement should take place not later than November 1987. A mandate was given to the Egyptian delegation to take the necessary steps in determining the exact dates with the Egyptian authorities and timely informing the Chairman of the Federation and the Secretariat. A delegation composed of the Chairman of the Federation, the Secretary General and the ECA representatives would visit Cairo in November 1987 for the finalization of the Headquarters Agreement.

Practical modalities for the establishment of the Secretariat and launching of operational activities /Agenda item 5(c)/

15. The meeting was greatly concerned by the lack of progress in launching the operational phase of the Federation. Therefore, as a means of commencing its activities, the meeting adopted the following operational activities:

(a) A National African Trade Directory should be published under the auspices of the Federation. ECA was given a mandate to finalize the matter with the publishers and the Secretary General, through ECA, should sign the necessary contract.

(b) The Secretary General should actively take part in ECA trade promotion activities and other related activities such as the national, sub-regional and regional Trade Fairs. In particular, the Secretary General should take part in the forthcoming PTA Trade Fair to be held in Zaire in 1988 with a view to using it as a forum to increase the African business community's acquaintance with the Federation.

(c) The Secretariat of the Federation should embark on publishing a periodical with the main objective of launching the activities of the Federation and increasing awareness of its existence.

(d) ECA should make proposals for an emblem of the Federation to be used in the Federations' letterheads, envelopes and other publications. This proposal should be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the General Assembly.